

**CHARLIE BAKER**  
GOVERNOR



**KARYN POLITO**  
LT. GOVERNOR

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## **Governor Baker Calls for Increased Penalties for Assaulting Police Officers**

*Files legislation to make assaulting an officer and causing serious bodily harm a felony*

**BOSTON** – Governor Charlie Baker today [filed legislation](#) to strengthen court procedures and increase the penalty for individuals charged with assaulting a police officer from a misdemeanor to a felony when causing serious bodily harm. The bill proposes changes that would give the courts an enhanced ability to deal with individuals who have demonstrated a flagrant disregard for law enforcement and who pose a threat to public safety.

“Police officers have difficult and dangerous jobs and the current law does not allow for adequate penalties for those who assault officers and cause them serious harm,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “We owe it to law enforcement and to the community at large to appropriately recognize the seriousness of such assaults and seek a penalty that is in line with the gravity of such an offense.”

“An attack on a police officer is an attack on the rule of law, and our system should have a proportional response available to deal with such individuals,” **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. “People who attack law enforcement must be aware that such actions will not be taken lightly in the Commonwealth.”

“Being able to hold someone who has committed a serious assault on a police officer would be a significant step toward keeping dangerous individuals off the streets as they await trial,” **said Public Safety Secretary Dan Bennett.**

The proposed legislation would make three changes in the way that courts could respond to people who commit assaults and batteries on police officers.

First, in cases where the person causes serious bodily injury to the police officer, the penalty will be upgraded from a misdemeanor to a felony and the maximum sentence will be increased to ten years in state prison. The current maximum is set at two and a half years.

Second, in cases where an individual causes serious bodily injury to a police officer, judges will be precluded from continuing the case without a finding, placing the defendant on probation, or giving the defendant a suspended sentence. These are not appropriate punishments when a person breaks a police officer’s jaw or arm, blinds an officer, or causes an injury that result in a substantial risk of death. Instead, judges will be required to impose a sentence of at least one year of incarceration in cases involving this sort of serious injury.

Finally, the governor’s bill would allow judges to consider whether individuals charged with this offense present a danger to the community and, in appropriate cases, hold the person pretrial. Under current law, judges are required to release a person charged with assaulting a police officer in the line of duty without considering whether that person is a danger to the community. While not every person who commits this offense necessarily presents a danger to the community such that he or she should be held pretrial, the nature of the offense is such that a court should at least be permitted to ask the question.

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